

## War...What's it Good for?

There's an old soul tune that asks the proverbial question - war....what's it good for? The song focuses on the war men wage upon one another with tanks and planes and bullets. In our more parochial world of business, sometimes we seek to emulate our comrades in uniform and approach trade and commerce as if our lives actually depended on it. We view competitors as enemies and we map out territories we want to conquer and control (from a market dominance perspective).

Surely a lot can be learned from war when it comes to business practices. The tactics of war, when mastered, can transform someone into an excellent business leader, both because of the leadership skills developed, the ability to calculate and take risks, and the capacity to plan and execute, all the while anticipated the actions of the other side.

The downside to a warlike approach to business is the inability to distinguish friend from foe or convert foe into friend. A business strategy that begins with the proposition that all players are enemies leaves little room for strategic partnerships and joint ventures. This can lead a company to doing battle, even when a battle isn't necessary. That wastes time, money and executive focus.

The very nature of competition may lead to warlike thinking, as it is hard to compete in a passive manner, and even harder to maintain balance and limits when competing as hard as you can. This leads to excesses in tactics that often lead to hard feelings...which is only a step away from things getting ugly. The rest of that old soul tune answers its own question with a resounding "absolutely nothing". In business certainly, war is futile. Profits and power increase in a civil and fair environment.